

From: Larry Sand [<mailto:lawrencesand@sbcglobal.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, May 05, 2015 11:53 AM
To: Kenneth McDonald
Subject: Elementary Indoctrination

Ken,

In the following, I voice my disapproval of labor's intrusion into the California state standards.

<http://www.city-journal.org/2015/cjc0424ls.html>

If a brief statement summarizing the piece is necessary, please let me know. Thanks.

Larry Sand

California

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Elementary Indoctrination

Teachers' union propaganda is creeping into California's public school curricula.

April 24, 2015

To say California's teachers' unions wield outsize influence over state education policy is hardly novel. From setting tenure rules to rewriting dismissal statutes and blocking pension reforms, the California Teachers Association and the California Federation of Teachers roam the halls of the legislature like varsity all-stars. But less well known are the unions' efforts to remake curriculum—and thereby influence the next generation of citizens and voters.

According to labor expert [Kevin Dayton](#), organized labor has been trying to get its collective hooks into classroom content since 1981, when the City University of New York developed the "American Social History Project." The idea was to present the history of marginalized and oppressed groups—including labor unions—to a "broad popular audience." In California, the project took a great leap forward in 2001, when Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg cooked up the Speaker's Commission on Labor Education, which, as Dayton explains, was established "to address issues of labor education in California's public school system." At the commission's behest, Governor Gray Davis signed [a bill that](#) encouraged school districts to set aside the first week in April as "Labor History Week" and "commemorate it with appropriate educational exercises to make pupils aware of the important role that the labor movement has played in shaping California and the United States."

By 2012, labor's "week" had morphed into "[Labor History Month](#)," and California's teachers' unions began advancing their politicized agenda. The CFT's [elementary curriculum](#) includes a story about a "[mean farmer](#)" and his ticked-off hens that organize against him. The CTA meantime offers up a passel of lessons with a heavy emphasis on issues such as "[tax fairness](#)." The University of California's [Miguel Contreras Labor Program](#) joined in, adding an anthology of stories promoting the [IWW](#), a radical union noted for its ties to socialism and anarchism, as well as a biography of America's singing Stalinist, [Pete Seeger](#).

The unions were on the move again in 2014, as the California Department of Education began its periodic [review](#) of the state's history framework. In November, the CFT sent a [proposal](#) to the Instructional Quality Commission, an advisory body to the state board of education on matters concerning curriculum, instructional materials, and content standards. The union's suggestions included downplaying the Second Great Awakening—the eighteenth-century religious revival that had a profound effect on the temperance, abolition, and women's rights movements—in favor of greater emphasis on anti-Muslim discrimination after the 9/11 attacks. The union also wants the United States described as an "empire" that regularly "dominate[s] other civilizations," despite the nation's record of rebuilding countries we have defeated in war, such as Germany and Japan after World War II.

Naturally, the CFT makes a case for a "Labor Studies" elective. California is considering a [lesson](#) that would let students "participate in a collective bargaining simulation to examine the struggles of workers to be paid for the value of their labor and to work under safe conditions. They can examine legislation that gave workers the right to organize into unions, to improve working conditions, and to prohibit discrimination." The Speaker's Commission on Labor Education co-chairs, Fred Glass and Kent Wong, weighed in with a [letter](#) of their own urging the Instructional Quality Commission to establish the labor studies elective.

Will the unions advocate a full and fair treatment of labor's history, including routine episodes of union violence and intimidation? Can students expect thorough exploration of labor economics, including how collective bargaining lowers the pay of many workers due to wage compression? Probably not. It's even less likely that students will hear anything about the teachers' unions twenty-first century political ventures—such as how the CTA spent more than \$26 million in 2000 to defeat a school-voucher initiative that would have let families escape failing schools, or how, in 2012, it successfully lobbied to defeat [SB 1530](#), which would have simplified the process of firing pedophile teachers.

The teachers' unions are clearly lobbying for changes to a curriculum they believe presents a sanitized version of U.S. history, but they would simply replace disfavored "myths" with

their own versions. As an American history teacher for much of the last decade of my career, I was faithful to the state framework and taught extensively about slavery and other injustices in our collective past. Most other history instructors I knew did the same. We didn't browbeat the kids, however, into believing that American history was riddled with treachery and malevolence. If parents and citizens don't take action, a bundle of America-bashing lessons, distorted history, and indoctrination into the glories of collective bargaining may become a part of the Golden State's curriculum.

[Larry Sand](#), a retired teacher, is president of the California Teachers Empowerment Network and a contributor to City Journal's book, [The Beholden State: California's Lost Promise and How to Recapture It](#).